

punch

OR
THE LONDON CHARIVARI



Vol. CC No. 5213

February 12 1941

Charivaria

A LONDON theatre company sleeps in the building every night. The war changes everything. Dramatic critics now go home to sleep.

A picture is published of Mr. WENDELL WILLKIE sitting in a London bus. Beginner's luck, we suppose, got him a seat.



Our Candid Advertisers

"P— L—'s
Terrible love story of the 16th
century."
Publisher's Advt.

"MUSSOLINI Keeps His
Ear to the Ground," says a
heading. Very slimming, we
should think.

The FUEHRER's speech at
the Berlin Sportspalast lasted
eighty-nine minutes. Exactly eighty-nine minutes. It only
seemed longer.

Very severe frosts we were having this time last year,
according to the newspapers.

In a recent attack on the Greeks, the Italians were
successfully pushed back from the positions from which
it was launched.

The post of an Italian Cabinet Minister sent to take over a
command at the Front is not to be filled in his absence.
Well, if there is anything in precedent he'll soon be back.

JOE LOUIS won his latest fight with a blow to his
opponent's stomach. That's HITLER's idea too, but so
far he hasn't got past Lord WOOLTON's defence.

Now that the Reich is
acquiring yet more living-
space to the south of Ger-
many everyone is asking
where Italy can go.

There was a court case
some time ago concerning
the possession of a pet
porcupine. Complete agree-
ment was reached on all
points.

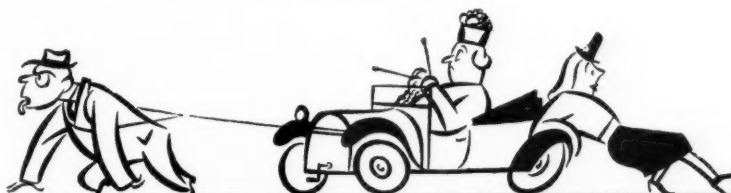
"Answering questions, such as whether the repairing of belligerent
vessels in U.S. ports would be a violation of International Law,
Mr. Hull replied:

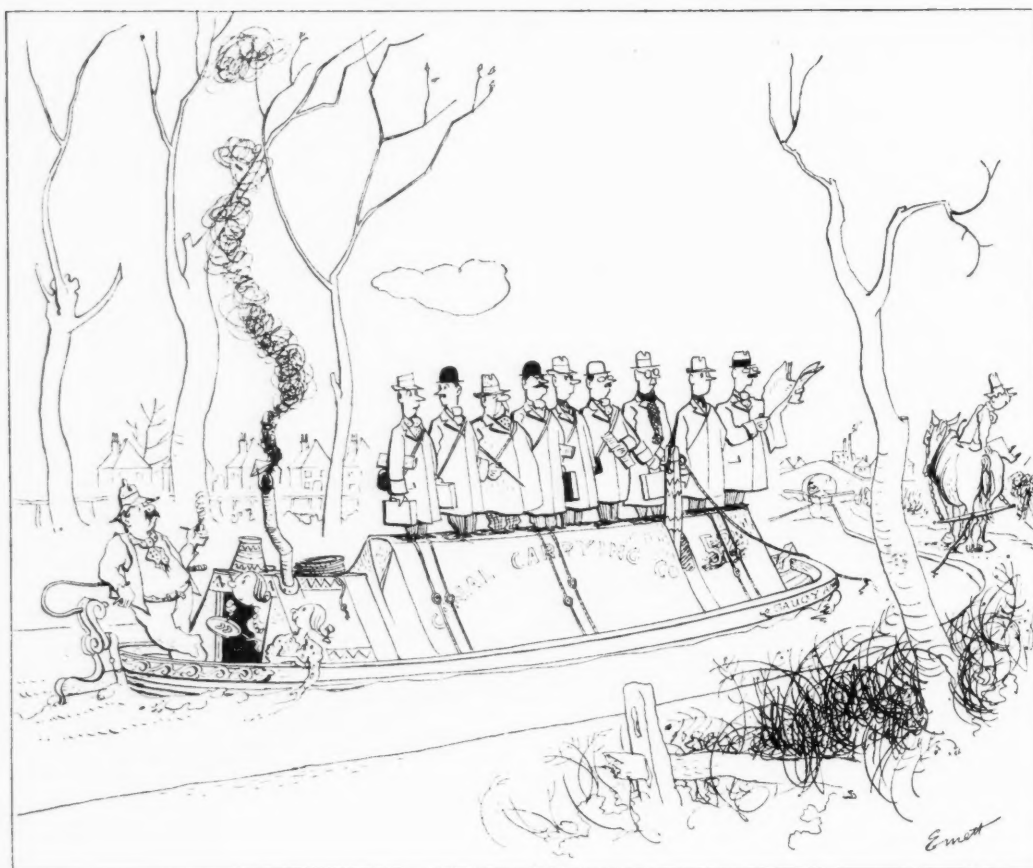
ACT SOOL."

Daily Paper.

Let the boys figure *that* out.

"A car, however old, is an advantage," says a dealer.
That's true, so long as one doesn't have to push one's
advantage home.





"Well, I shan't be sorry when they put the 8.15 bus on again."

The Perfect Crime

AS I waited for the night express that was to take me from Somewhere in England to Somewhere (Else) in Scotland, I knew of course that I was destined to take part in a train murder drama; whether I was to solve the mystery, to play the asinine second string, to commit the crime myself, or merely to watch every move in the game, I was not sure—it was too early to say; but I had keyed up my mind to reporters' pitch. I wanted my book to sell.

I had first to identify the train, for my presence on the wrong one would clearly have handicapped my investigations. As it approached, I was well aware that it was going either north or south, and since it was imperative to know which, I addressed myself to a

sleeping-car attendant who was skilful enough to draw up before me; cunningly avoiding a possible mistake of 180 degrees I said, "Is this train going west?"

"I hope not, Sir. No warnings yet, anyway." A crack, I had to admit, but informative. "Where are you for?" he asked after a pause.

I named my destination, and was told to get in quick and change at Perth, so I climbed in after my two huge suitcases. I rejected his offer of a sleeper, however. Sleepers certainly offer a magnificent field for murder, but I always go to sleep in the things, and I could not afford to sleep that night—there was sterner work in hand. He proceeded to push me through a door which separated the sleepers from the

rest of the train, and locked it after me. I at once decided, rightly or wrongly, to let the sleepers pass out of my life and the history of crime.

There were ten other coaches; three of the dining-car type, the rest with normal side corridors. Twice I looked through the door into each compartment of these seven coaches, but there was something about my reception, especially at the second visit, which convinced me that I could serve my fellows better elsewhere. Each of the dining-car models was divided by a sliding door into two halves, each half contained eight little sections, and each section was graced by a table with seats for four people. To prevent possible confusion, I had better explain that the eight sections were arranged

four on each side. The reader will now find it easy to work out the full complement of these coaches: $3 \times 2 \times 8 \times 4 = 192$, to be exact. 191 of these seats were occupied, and 190 of the occupants were awake; the odd man, by whom was the vacant seat, was slumped forward with his head on the table, apparently asleep. Apparently, I say; but as I walked by him time after time, the conviction grew in my mind that I had found an important clue. His seaman's collar could not conceal the peculiar colour of the back of his neck. My premonition had surely been right, for I was obviously fated to sit by the murdered man!

My first thought, of course, was that the thirty other occupants were accomplices in the murder. Perhaps two rugger sides had murdered their referee? Hardly: four unmistakable W.A.A.F.s were present. A family affair? Unlikely: the organization of such a fancy-dress stunt would have been beyond any family, and anyway it is my experience that a family united in its desire to cut off one of its members can do the job cheaply and easily in any one of half a dozen ways.

We ran into a station, and an All Clear sounded; the lights of the train were at once switched off in response. Nothing could now be seen except a few glowing cigarettes; nothing at all was to be heard after the applause had died away, until—

"Where are we?" said the body hoarsely.

"I dunno," I answered with a thrill of horror. "Have a sandwich."

"Thanks," said the body. It began to eat, invisibly but quite audibly.

"Have a drink," I said in consternation, fumbling for my thermos.

"Thanks," said the body. "Cheerio!"

I was now really scared. "Cigarette?" I said.

"Thanks," repeated the body. "I gotta light."

I could bear this no longer; faced with the Powers of Darkness, I am always ready to throw in my towel. But then a sudden thought brought me indescribable relief. The sailor, I noted, seemed to be not only alive, but kicking. Perhaps he wasn't dead after all. Perhaps the murder had yet to be committed. Perhaps I was to be the murderer. Perhaps—great heaven!—I was to be the victim. I had only just thought of that.

I thought of it for the next two hours and twenty minutes, all spent in complete darkness. Every second I expected a knife in the ribs, a pistol in the ear, or a sweet-smelling handkerchief over the face—and I lost a hair. I suffered extreme mental agony when

in my agitation I calculated that this process occurred eighty-four thousand times; luckily of course eight thousand four hundred was the correct figure. If only I knew how many hairs I started the job with I should now be able to inform the reader how many I still retain.

The lights at last came on again, probably on the sounding of an Alert, and I did another reconnaissance, based on the theory that the German High Command was responsible for the murder, which had been committed during the period of darkness engineered by their perfectly-timed aeroplanes; but I could not find even an odd boot sticking out of a doorway at a sickening angle to support this hypothesis. Again I decided to concentrate on my own half-coach, and took up a novel; as I turned the pages I allowed nothing to escape me—not a remark, movement, or even a sigh. Several people got out at Carlisle, a fact suspicious in itself but to some extent explained by the instructions of the ticket-collector, who told them to change there. Just before dawn I finished the novel, still watching my neighbours like a lynx, though they little knew it. Two hours later I woke up in Perth and pushed my cases out of the train.

One of them was *extraordinarily* heavy. Another thrill of horror, quite like the last, passed through me, and passed quickly back when it suddenly occurred to me that I had not the

slightest recollection of packing the thing. I had undoubtedly brought it in my taxi the night before. But what was in it then—and what *now*—I dared not think. When I found myself unobserved, I placed it on a seat and opened it. It was full, quite full, of sand.

I glanced round at the train. The able-bodied ex-body had collected around himself quite a group of spectators, who all seemed to find in my occupation something to relieve the monotony of the journey. I threw down my cigarette, solemnly emptied the sand on it, and turned away.

I still don't know where that sand came from, though I suspect my brother. But whether he committed the murder, and if so, how, I have no idea. I can only bow my head in recognition of the mind that planned it, and the skill and daring that went to its only too successful performance.

At "The Mulberry Tree"

"AGRICULTURAL," sez Sam to me
As we drinks our ale at "The
Mulberry Tree,"

"Is a durn long word, but then, why
not?"

It's a durn long job as we 'a got.

What wi' the yard an' the sty an' the
stall,

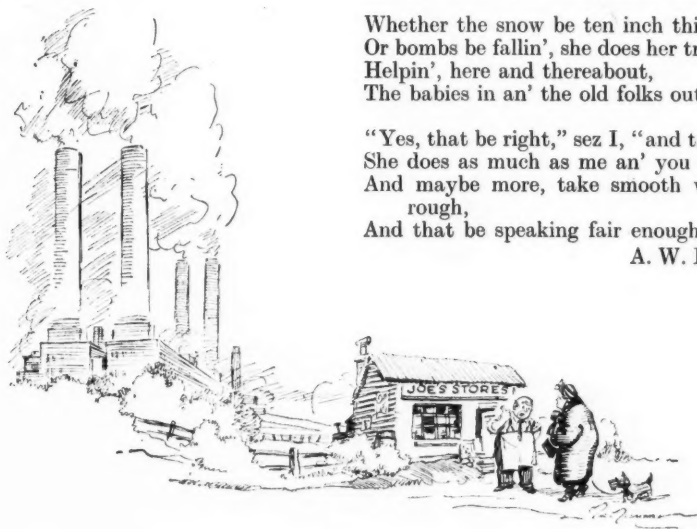
Ploughin' an' reapin' an' stackin' an' all,
There's only one job as bad—or worse—
An' that's the job of the Districk Nurse.

Whether the snow be ten inch thick,
Or bombs be fallin', she does her trick,
Helpin', here and thereabout,
The babies in an' the old folks out."

"Yes, that be right," sez I, "and true;
She does as much as me an' you . . .
And maybe more, take smooth with
rough,

And that be speaking fair enough."

A. W. B.



"They nearly got the County Power Station the night they
were after my stores."

Conquest

BEFORE the flowers of Spring are here,
While lanes are all awash,
The wise men make it very clear
We may expect the Boche.

Come they by air a million strong,
Come they across the sea,
They shall remain in England long
The wisest men agree.

And all the flowers of England's Spring
From Cornwall to the Wash
Shall be content with this one thing—
To bloom above the Boche.

EVOE.

Cash Sale in Lambeth

FOR the sixth time in fifteen minutes Miss Tillie Pinkin ran from her bedroom into the living-room of 61, Cosham House, Lambeth. "Ere, Ma," she said, "jus' a sec."

Mrs. Pinkin looked up from her knitting. "If y'r brother gets 'is face perminintly contorted 'e'll ave you ter blame," she said. "You've int'rupted me so much, this Balaclava 'elmit's got the mouth openin' round the side."

"Perce won't mind," Tillie said. "'E alwers was one to talk froo is 'at. But look, Ma, d'you like me 'air done in a Garbo like this wiv me mouth oringe on a nootral back-ground?"

Mr. Pinkin stirred in his chair. "Why not jus' be nacheral?" he said.

"Jus' be nacheral!" Tillie said scornfully. "If some men dressed as up-to-date as they talk there'd be a good steady demand f'r woad round 'ere." She turned to her mother. "Honist, Ma," she said, "do I look the sorta girl you'd like your son to marry if you was Sid Puckle's mother?"

"If y'r Ma was Mrs. Puckle," said Mr. Pinkin, "she'd be delighted to think Sid was gointer 'ave such a distingey pa-in-law."

"If ever you go to the Zoo," Mrs. Pinkin said, "I reckon your nacheral modesty 'ud make the peacocks die of jealousy."

There was a loud knock at the front door.

"That's Sid," Tillie shouted, "an' me wiv on'y one eye-brow on. Shan't be five minnits. Mind you offer 'im a glass of stout, Pa. It'll be quite safe," she added, "'e on'y drinks bitter." She ran back to her bedroom.

"Why, Siddeney!" said Mrs. Pinkin, as she admitted S. Puckle, A.C.2. "Come on in."

"Ta very much," said Mr. Puckle. "Tillie say she was expectin' me?"

"Well, I 'ad rather gathered so," Mrs. Pinkin admitted. "She says she'll on'y be five minnits, so you won't 'ave to wait more'n 'alf-an'-our. Mr. P.'s in there," she added as she went towards the kitchen, "but I'll bring you a cuppa tea soon to cheer you up."

"Ullo," said Mr. Pinkin. "'Scuse me not gettin' up, but I'm practising stayin' put—ready f'r the invasion. 'Ow've you bin keepin' in the R.A.F.?"

"Oh, on the quee veeve," said Mr. Puckle. "Tillie keepin' pretty fit?"

"She's keepin' fit," said Mr. Pinkin, "but of course she gets 'er looks from 'er Ma."

"Well," said Mr. Puckle, "opinions differentiate, I know, about scen'ry—but I reckon she'll make me a good wife."

"Ar," said Mr. Pinkin. "I thought the same about Mrs. P. before I married 'er."

"Well—er—asn't she?" Mr. Puckle inquired anxiously.

"Near enough," Mr. Pinkin said. "The trouble is, though, mos' wimmin aren't content wiv makin' a man a good wife; they keep on tryin' to make 'im a good 'usband."

"Oh," said Mr. Puckle. He began to bite his finger-nails.

"Don't think I'm tryin' to put you orf," Mr. Pinkin said hastily. "After all, if it wasn't f'r marriage it 'ud take nigh on fifty years ter get an army fightin' fit. But Tillie's the sort 'oo will 'ave 'er own way."

"Ar," said Mr. Puckle. "Plenty of will power."

"Exackly!" said Mr. Pinkin. "So start in cultivatin' y'r won't power now, see?"

"The chap in the bunk nexta me is married," Mr. Puckle said. "'E seems 'appy enough."

"Let me see," said Mr. Pinkin. "Where're you stationed?"

"Somewhere in Berks," said Mr. Puckle.

"An' where's this chap's wife?" Mr. Pinkin said.

"Walsall," said Mr. Puckle. "Wiv 'er mother."

"Well of course," Mr. Pinkin said. "'E's found the perfick reseed f'r a 'appy marriage."

"Still," said Mr. Puckle valiantly, "I bet if you 'ad your time over agen you'd go an' get married."

"Prob'ly," said Mr. Pinkin. "Mos' firs' offenders 'oo're given another chance usully take it."

The door opened, and Miss Tillie Pinkin sauntered towards Mr. Puckle. She smiled her favourite Inscrutable Smile of a Beautiful Spy. "Wot ho, Sid," she said.

"Coo!" said Mr. Puckle, suddenly finding his collar too tight. "You look stoopendus!"

"Yerse," said Mr. Pinkin. "I thought you'd notice the change."

Tillie snorted. "You see wot I 'ave to put up wiv 'ere, Sid. In the front line all the time. Get my letter?"

"Ra-ther!" said Mr. Puckle. "Must've bin quite a do, 'avin' Mr. Willkie down 'ere an' all."

"Yerse," Tillie said. "When they was filmin' it there was on'y three people an' a coupla 'andcarts between me an' 'im."

"Practic'ly arm-in-arm," Mr. Pinkin said. "There's no tellin' wot wouldn't 'ave 'appened if 'e 'adn't bin summonsed back 'ome."

Mrs. Pinkin came in with a loaded tray. "Tea," she said.

"You've bin a long time in the kitching," said Mr. Pinkin.

"Twenny-three years," Mrs. Pinkin said. "'Ome On The Range,' that's my signitchure chune."

"It mus' be 'eavenly to 'ave a 'usband to cook for," Tillie said. "I can't think of anythin' better."

Mr. Pinkin shrugged his shoulders. "No imagination," he said. "You'll find that a 'andicap if you marry Tillie."

"Whaddya mean 'if'?" Tillie shouted. "Sid an' me 'ave bin engaged fourteen munce."

"Unofficially," said Mr. Puckle.

"Yerse," Tillie said, "but when we've finished tea we're gointer buy the ring, aren't we?"

"Well," said Mr. Puckle, "I did say we would."

"Wot's bitin' you?" Tillie demanded.

"I bin thinkin'," said Mr. Puckle.

"Listen to it!" Tillie said. "Practic'ly engaged f'r over a year, an' e' suddenly starts thinkin'. Why the sudden change?"

"Well, we didn't oughta be 'asty," said Mr. Puckle.

"Asty!" Tillie shouted. "You oughta know me by now!"

"I dunno," said Mr. Pinkin. "There's men 'oo've bin

THE CHANGING FACE OF BRITAIN AGAIN
STREET SCENE



Normal



The First Air-Raid Warning



The Tenth Air-Raid Warning



Tongue

The Hundredth Air-Raid Warning



"Yes, that'll be the one I was telling you about."

married forty years, an' they still don't know their wives. Not to understand 'em, like."

"Ave you bin puttin' ideas in Sid's 'ead?" Tillie demanded.

"Jus' a little friendly advice, that's all," Mr. Pinkin said.

"There's no need to start treatin' 'im as a friend when 'e's almos' one of the fam'ly," Tillie said indignantly. "An' wot about the lovely present I've got 'im?"

"Present?" said Mr. Puckle.

"Yerse," Tillie said. "I've saved an' saved so's to be able to give you somethin' when you give me the ring. I got it 'ere. See?"

"Coo!" said Mr. Puckle. "Cuff-links. Gold too!"

"Solid," Tillie said. "You don't get things like that wiv a pound of tea these days."

"No," Mr. Puckle admitted. "You don't even get the tea."

"So far's I'm concerned," Tillie said, "the bes' is on'y jus' good enough f'r you, an' 'ang the expense."

Mr. Puckle stood up and puffed out his chest so that his uniform almost fitted him. "Tillie," he said, "I was almos' took in by certain remarks of a certain gent, but me mind's made up now. Any girl 'oo can save up to buy a feller a present like that'll make a darned good manager. Come on, we're orf to the joolers."

"That's the one," Tillie said, as they gazed in the jeweller's window. "Jus' the thing f'r me, an jus' the price f'r you."

They went in.

"Is wise choosing," said the jeweller, as he made out the bill. "Dimints. Platnum. Perfick!"

Mr. Puckle counted out the notes. "I'm gettin' engaged," he said.

"You dun't say!" said the jeweller. "If you dun't tell me, how shall I guess it? Congretsulations!"

As Mr. Puckle walked towards the door he noticed a small printed notice. "'Ere, 'ere," he said indignantly, "this card says fifteen per cent. discount fer cash. You didn't oughta try an' diddle me."

The jeweller's eyes narrowed. "You should tell me I diddle!" he said.

"Don't argue," said Mr. Puckle. "Look at the notice."

"Dun't look," said the jeweller. "Listen. Fiftin per cent. discount is fourtin an' six. I give the discount five hours bafore I sell the ring. And at that price I'm telling you is a big-size bargain you're getting with those coff-links."

Mr. Puckle bit his lip and joined Tillie outside. They walked along in silence.

"They've got one on the farm near our camp," Mr. Puckle said at last.

"Got wot?" Tillie said.

"A bull wiv a ring froo its nose," said Mr. Puckle. "They tie it up."

"The pore thing," Tillie said.

"You're tellin' me!" said Mr. Puckle.

My Bomb, I Believe

"A TIDY crater," commented Warden Potts, as he and the Post Warden of B.6 halted in their patrol to gaze at the three-weeks-old hole gaping in the moonlight on the other side of the road. "Did in both water and gas, they tell me."

"And the sewer," added the P.W. without enthusiasm.

Overhead a raider chugged; occasionally a gun barked.

"Lucky miss for us, that—just in B.5 sector," went on Warden Potts. "Some time since we've had an incident."

The P.W. grunted.

"Up at headquarters," Potts continued, "they tell me Post Warden B.5 has been bragging that B.5 have had more incidents than any other sector in the district."

"He's a liar," said P.W. B.6.

"They did have those six bombs in the cemetery—and that Molotov bread-basket—"

"I know, I know," broke in P.W. B.6. "There's no need for anyone to tell me where the bombs 'ave dropped 'ereabouts."

"He says it's because he's got all the important military objectives in his sector," the warden went on.

"Meaning the 'Red Lion,' no doubt," suggested the P.W. with sarcasm.

"Well, there's the Drill Hall."

"Where they 'old Sunday School treats."

"No doubt Jerry thinks the military drill there," ventured Warden Potts.

"I'll tell you what it is they're after," said the P.W.—"it's the gas-works."

"But that's on our sector."

"'Ave you 'eard of Jerry 'itting anything he's tried for yet?" inquired the P.W. "Don't you read your papers? 'Alf the bombs he aims for England drop on Ireland."

Above, the steady *chug-chug* continued. Warden Potts cast an anxious eye heavenwards.

"He ain't going to drop anything," said the P.W. "He's been scratching around like an old 'en for an hour or more."

"Hens sometimes drop eggs," said Warden Potts.

"I wish he would," said P.W. B.6. —"right slam in the middle of B.6. That'd shut P.W. B.5 up for a night or two."

"Look out!" yelled Potts.

As the bomb whistled, Potts threw himself down, but the Post Warden adopted an attitude more in keeping

with his bulk and the stiffness of his joints.

Whang! They were covered in dirt.

"You asked for it!" shouted Potts.

The P.W. was already at the crater. It was bang in the middle of the road. "Gas main gone—and water—maybe sewer. Lend us your back."

Warden Potts turned his back for a book-rest while his chief made out his Air Raid Damage report.

"Get that through to the Report Centre," said the P.W. "And send Dobson for traffic diversion—and tell them the hincident is well in 'and."

"Hallow!" cried a voice. A white hat advanced from the other side of the newly-formed crater. "P.W. B.5," said the face underneath. "I'm Incident Officer here."

"This 'ere hincident is mine," said P.W. B.6 authoritatively.

"Excuse me—smack in my sector," said P.W. B.5.

"Just where do you reckon your sector ends?" inquired P.W. B.6.

"Against your side of the road."

"You're wrong," said P.W. B.6. "Against yours."

"I've seen the map."

"'Olding it upside-down, maybe."

"I've sent my damage report through," said P.W. B.5.

"Writing it while you were waiting for the bomb to land, no doubt," said P.W. B.6.

"And my Express Report."

"Express, for what?" asked P.W. B.6 incredulously.

"For fire."

"I can't see a fire," said P.W. B.6.

"That gas-main may go up at any time," declared P.W. B.5. "You want the services handy."



"I don't know; they never SAID what it stood for."

"Pity you didn't get the Road Repair Squad to fill the 'ole in before it was made," said P.W. B.6.

"Ho!" cried P.W. B.5. "What's this? Looks as though the electric cable's gone."

"Best keep away, you'll get yourself electrified," said P.W. B.6.

A warden appeared behind P.W. B.5.

"You, Sid? Take this Supplementary back—electricity's gone."

"Wasting your time," said P.W. B.6. "It's the root of a tree."

"This one was meant for the Drill Hall," said P.W. B.5.

"That's right," said P.W. B.6.

"They always drop a thousand-pounder when they want to blow up a wood shanty."

"It's the military they're after," said P.W. B.5.

"Or the dart-board. That there was meant for the gas-works."

"That's why they dropped it half a mile away," said P.W. B.5 rudely.

"Jerry's got a new technique," said P.W. B.6. "Nowadays he aims to miss because he knows he don't stand an earthly if he aims to 'it."

"He's still overhead," said P.W. B.5, as a gun barked.

"Waiting for the Armistice. He thinks we'll give in if the Drill Hall's gone."

"Here comes the rest of my lads," said P.W. B.5. He added, "I've taken this incident on and I'm sticking to it."

P.W. B.6 jerked a thumb behind him. "My crowd is back there," he said. "Big tough lot of fellows."

"I've got my duty to do," said P.W. B.5.

"I'm doing mine," said P.W. B.6.

The two groups of wardens stood on opposite sides of the crater. A car drove up. It had the letters A.R.P. on the head-lamps.

"Here's headquarters," said P.W. B.5. "Now you'll see."

An official came out of the car towards them. "All right, boys. The Chief has decided to hand over the incident to B.10 post—to give them a bit of practice. You lot can't expect all the cream."

"Come on," said P.W. B.6 in disgust to P.W. B.5. "I'm going to patrol as far as 'The Chequers'."

The two white hats moved off. At the door of the pub P.W. B.6 stopped to gaze at the sky where the enemy plane could still be heard churning heavily.

"Pah!" he muttered. "Couldn't 'it a map of the world—full size."

He disappeared into the bar.

A Mystery Explained

IT is now some time since a little elderly man who said he was a licensed horse-slaughterer (but he may have been boasting) told me this story. If it were longer ago than that I might have forgotten it, but you can't have everything.

This man, who had two sons, one a very able grocer's-boy, declared that he and he alone could explain the mystery of the *Marie Celeste*.

"It was a flat calm," he began. "In the middle of the broad Atlantic, we——"

"You were on board?"

"Certainly I was on board. You want me to drown? Of course I was on board. Though I had, I admit, only just come up after being sent below to count the barnacles. You know the old song—'The *Marie Celeste* was barnaced and green as grass below, beelow, beelow, whoa-oh-ho-ho, listen to the JAIRZ come——'"

"How many were there?" I interrupted.

"Barnacles? Oh, a fairish number," said the man. "That's what I told the captain. 'There's a fairish number of barnacles down there, captain,' I said. He replied 'What do I care so long as I have my strength?'"

"The captain of the *Marie Celeste*?"

"Oh, bless you, no," said the man. "This was a friend of mine, a little fat feller we used to call 'the captain' because he'd been an Army captain's baptain, or as it is now called *batman*, in the Peninsular War, and wore an armlet to prove it—a savoury armlet he said it was. As for the captain of the ship, I told him there weren't *any* barnacles, because if I'd said there were any he'd have had me down

there scraping them off before you could say H. Robinson Cleaver or Freeman, Willis and Crofts. So he said 'Fine! Fine! I can't abide a barnacle.'"

"Really?"

"Well, I admit what he really said was 'I can't abarn a bidacle,' but we were as loyal a set of men as ever sailed the seven seas and we guessed what he meant. Well, we went on in our flat calm, busying ourselves in various ways. I remember I busied myself with a scheme for stepping the mainmast out to starboard so that the wind would go on into the mainsail after leaving the foresail, instead of blowing away and being wasted. I explained it to the mate. 'Look at this, Mister,' I said. He very kindly pointed out that it wouldn't do, because when there was any wind it wouldn't be needed and when there wasn't it wouldn't be any use. I saw his point."

"I see it myself," I said. "But, by the way, what were you on board?"

"Even then I was a horse-slaughterer."

"But there weren't any horses on the *Marie*——"

"No," said the man. "That's just it. Think of the confusion if there had been! It was my duty to get rid of any that might turn up. Bless me, how do you suppose the captain would have managed with a lot of beastly great horses cluttering up the place? Horses on a ship! Bless me, you make me tired. I never heard of anything so ridiculous."

"Look," I said. "What about this mystery you were going to explain?"

"Ah, the mystery. I'll tell you. All of a sudden a stiff breeze got up, and we forged ahead. We bowled along. We bowled merrily along. Well, after we'd been bowling merrily along for a bit a great clamour arose from the cook's galley. The cook was kicking up a fuss because he'd lost his best colander. 'I've been robbed!' he shouted again and again. So the police were called at once."

"The what?"

"I didn't say they *came*, did I? Then the captain called us all together in the third-class lounge. 'Men,' he said, 'I have a grave duty. Our popular and efficient cook has lost his pet colander. I must ask the man who appropriated it to come forward frankly,' said the captain. Nobody moved. What was to be done?"

"I wish you'd get to the point," I said.

"Impatience," said the man reprovingly, "butters no parsnips. What, I repeat, was to be done? Well, none of us could think, and evidently the captain couldn't either, for he dismissed us to our various tasks with a heavy heart. From that day to this, nobody else has known what became of the cook's colander. But as it happens I know, and for a very good reason. *It was I*," said the man, "*that threw it overboard.*"

"What for?"

"I took a dislike to it. All those silly little holes!" he said, and there was a long pause.

"And the mystery?" I asked at length.

"That was the mystery."

"But the famous mystery—why the *Marie Celeste* was found abandoned, with food on the tables and——"

"Oh, that. That would have been after I left the dear old ship. Ah, me!"

"Who?"

"Me."

"Oh."

R. M.



DAVID LANGDON

"Colonel Prendergast thanks you for submitting this, but he has an idea we've seen the same sort of thing somewhere before."



"Well, if you must know—I'm ten-stone stripped, an' sixteen-stone-two in my comfits."

Unsold Survivor

BEHOLD him single in the mart
A lone and solitary pig
Who had escaped the fatal cart
That snatched his brethren, small and big,
Remaining when the sales had ceased
Not discommoded in the least,
Though to the casual eye a beast
Of pure and perfect fig.

His countenance was calm and bland,
His body reasonably stout,
One liked his easy manners and
Th' apparent haleness of his snout;
His hue was an endearing pink,
His tail confessed a happy kink;
Try as one might, one could not think
Why he had been left out.

But, musing still, I seemed to see
That pig, new-born and freshly sty-ed,
Chosen from twenty odd to be
The farmer's daughter's pet and pride;
The little Selma watched him grow—
She loved him so, she loved him so—
Ignoring, for her future weal,
Pork on its lethal side.

Now he had grown among his peers
To ripe and marketable stuff,
And little Selma's parting tears
Met only with a stern rebuff,
Yet all day long the farmer's mind
Dwelt on the grief he'd left behind,
For, barring pigs, the man was kind,
Though outwardly a tough.

And when a would-be buyer came
And boldly said he'd have the lot,
His father's heart was touched with shame—
He may have lunched, or he may not—
And suddenly with eyes a-brim
He cried aloud "Take all but him;
Such is my little Selma's whim;
He shall escape the pot."

It was a touching sight, I ween,
When home at eve the farmer drew
And Selma, still a trifle green,
Fostered her portly pet anew;
And later, when the moon rode high,
Rose breathings from the well-fed sty
To little Selma's bed-y-bye,
And to the farmer's too.

DUM-DUM.

Little Talks

WELL, what I think about war-aims—

Do you?

What?

Think.

My dear fellow, I suppose I've thought more about the subject than anybody else in the Movement—

That wouldn't be difficult.

My dear fellow, what do you mean?

Well, what do you mean?

What about?

War-aims.

Well, it's not a fair question, really—

Hear, hear! Then why keep on putting it to the Government?

Dear old boy, you're really very tiresome.

Sorry. Go on.

What I mean is this—I want to see a better Britain and a better world emerging at the end of this war.

"Want"? Do you mean "want"? Or do you mean "expect"?

Well, "expect," if you like. I believe in believing in what I believe in.

Jolly good show! But what an extraordinary thing to expect! Do you think that war is a good thing?

No. It's disgusting—damnable.

Why should you expect a great good to come out of a great disgusting? You wouldn't say that you expected a pork sausage to emerge at the end of an avalanche.

I mean this—

One minute. Young Randolph Churchill put it very well in his maiden speech. I forget his exact words, but it was something like this: "If the war is to produce a new heaven and a new earth, why didn't we start it before?"

That's not quite fair.

Well, shall I put it this way? If a man stands watching his house, his farm, his machinery, his cattle and his crops being destroyed by fire or pestilence, do you go up to him and say: "Don't worry, old boy, everything will be much better after this"? Even if he's insured?

No, but—

Which we aren't.

Well, what I mean—and I think you'll agree—we've all got together so well in this war that it would be a great pity if we didn't stick together after it.

Of course I agree. But it seems to me that your sort of talk is designed to draw people apart.

In war—fine spirit, fine fellowship, fine resources. In peace—why not the same?

I agree, again. But the answer is fairly simple. Germany.

What d'you mean?

I don't agree that, in essence, the spirit and the fellowship were less real in peace-time than they are to-day—though, of course, they are more intense, and evident. What is different is—the resources.

Sorry to repeat myself—but what d'you mean?

Do you remember a patriotic, industrious, able, but unfortunate and much-abused statesman called Neville Chamberlain?

Vaguely. No—certainly.

Well, whatever you think about him in the revolting field of Foreign Affairs, you will admit that he was a sincere, active and capable social reformer at home?

Aye, aye.

I remember him talking, in a Budget Speech, of all the things he wanted to do—and had thought he might do—

But didn't. Why not?

Germany.

What d'you— No, I won't say it again.

Do. At that moment we were just beginning to recover from Germany's last war. At that moment Germany starts another war. So many of you talk as if Germany never started any wars at all!

Yes, but—

The house is burned down—in 1914. We say "We'll build it again—six stories this time. In 1934 we've got three stories done. Then there's a threat of burglars and we have to pause to do an electric burglar-fence all round (Germany). However, we struggle along, and by 1939 we've done five stories. Then



"Yes, this is the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries."

there's a darned earthquake (Germany); and almost everything falls down. But in 1941 you say: "Why in the world don't you promise to give us a ten-story house in 1942?" And the answer is—

Don't say it!

I do say it. Germany. Why shouldn't I say it? You might as well tell the story of the Garden of Eden and leave out the Snake.

Yes, but— Well, what I mean, you might win the war—certainly you might shorten the war—by a good, clear statement of your war-aims?

"Shorten the war"? Then this statement is going to be addressed to our enemies?

Not entirely.

Who to, then? I mean—"to whom"? Partly the enemies—partly others.

I see. And you're the chap who wants a good clear statement?

Oh, don't be tiresome!

I want to be tiresome. I will be tiresome. I shall be tiresome—as long as you talk cabbage-water. Now, first, is your statement of war-aims going to be honest, or not?

Honest, of course.

Right. Well, what is the object of the statement to the enemy?

To make him stop fighting.

We might say, for example: "We have no quarrel with the German people. Rise up, chuck Hitler out, and we will wrap you up in hot-water-bottles for ever after"?

Yes.

All right. But will that appeal very strongly to the Poles?

Not much, perhaps.

Or the Czechs?

Well—

Or the Dutch?

Not frightfully.

Or even the Danes?

Well, of course—

How right you are! So that, presumably, you would make a different statement to the nations I have mentioned? And there are others.

The wording might be a little different.

Oh, really? But would that be quite honest?

Oh, well—

And you see, it isn't only enemy and "other" countries at present. There are enemy and near-enemy countries. There are friendly occupied and near-friendly occupied countries—and friendly non-occupied countries. And neutral countries—and bogus neutrals. And allied countries—yes, genuine allies, who ought to be considered as much,

perhaps, as the genuine enemy and the bogus neutral.

Yes, but—

Now, if I understand you rightly, this statement of our war-aims is (a) to be addressed to all the different classes of countries I have mentioned and (b) to be detailed, comprehensive, and perfectly honest? Have I got you right, Steve?

Not exactly.

You amaze me. And, of course, it isn't only foreign countries you hope to impress by your statement of war-aims, is it? There's our own country—most important of all?

Well, I wouldn't say that.

Well, you darn well ought to. Take Ireland.

I don't want to take Ireland.

You've got to take Ireland. What would you promise about Southern Ireland?

That they should be united with the North.

Oh, yes? And that would so much stimulate Vichy that Pétain would send the Fleet to Portsmouth? (Not to mention the Poles.)

Well, no. But it would show that we meant business.

Would it? Would Northern Ireland like it?

Not at the moment, perhaps. But—

Then would it be business?

We should have to leave something to Time.

That's what the Government's doing. Take Italy.

I won't take Italy.

You will take Italy—and like it. In this complete, brief, popular, fundamental, detailed, simple, comprehensive, precise, defiant, diplomatic statement of our war-aims (at the end of the war), where does Italy come in? As an enemy, surrendering or not, as a friend, passive or active, occupied or non-occupied, as a neutral, or non-belligerent, occupied, non-occupied, genuine, bogus, or as an ally, active or passive? And, whatever the answer is, will your statement of war-aims about her be always the same? Are you going to please her by promising her Tunis? Are you going to inspire France by promising her Genoa? Are you going to inspire Ireland by promising Sicily Home Rule? Are you going to excite Rome to democratic fervour by abolishing the House of Lords? Are you going to get the Wops on your side by promising Monte Carlo to Spain? Or what?

Those are difficult questions.

My hat, they are! So why not give the Cabinet a day or two to think about them? After all, to beat the Germans is practically a whole-time job.

A. P. H.





"I suppose after the war they'll melt them down to make saucepans and things."

Ballade of Wishful Thinking

THE basic fact about these times of strife
Is that my job has vanished in the
blue.

I've reached another cross-roads of my life;

I'm short of cash (though that is nothing
new);

My hammer-toes have stopped me (sad but
true)

Joining the Army as had been my plan.

Right, then, I'll tell you what I want to do . . .
I want to be a Secret Service Man!

I keep my mouth shut, and when talk is rife

At parties, I'm the silent fellow who
Sits clam-like near the cocktail-tray. My wife
Complains that I keep secrets from her too.

I am a Sayers-Mason-Lefanu-

Knox-Oppenheim-Doyle-Buchan-Wallace fan;

I know an old red herring from a clue.

I want to be a Secret Service Man!

With practice I could learn to throw a knife,

And if forewarned might manage to construe

The secret whistle of a Burmese fife

Played in a dark deserted house in Kew.

I can work out a simple code or two;

I don't leave letters in the luggage-van

For any foreign countess to go through.

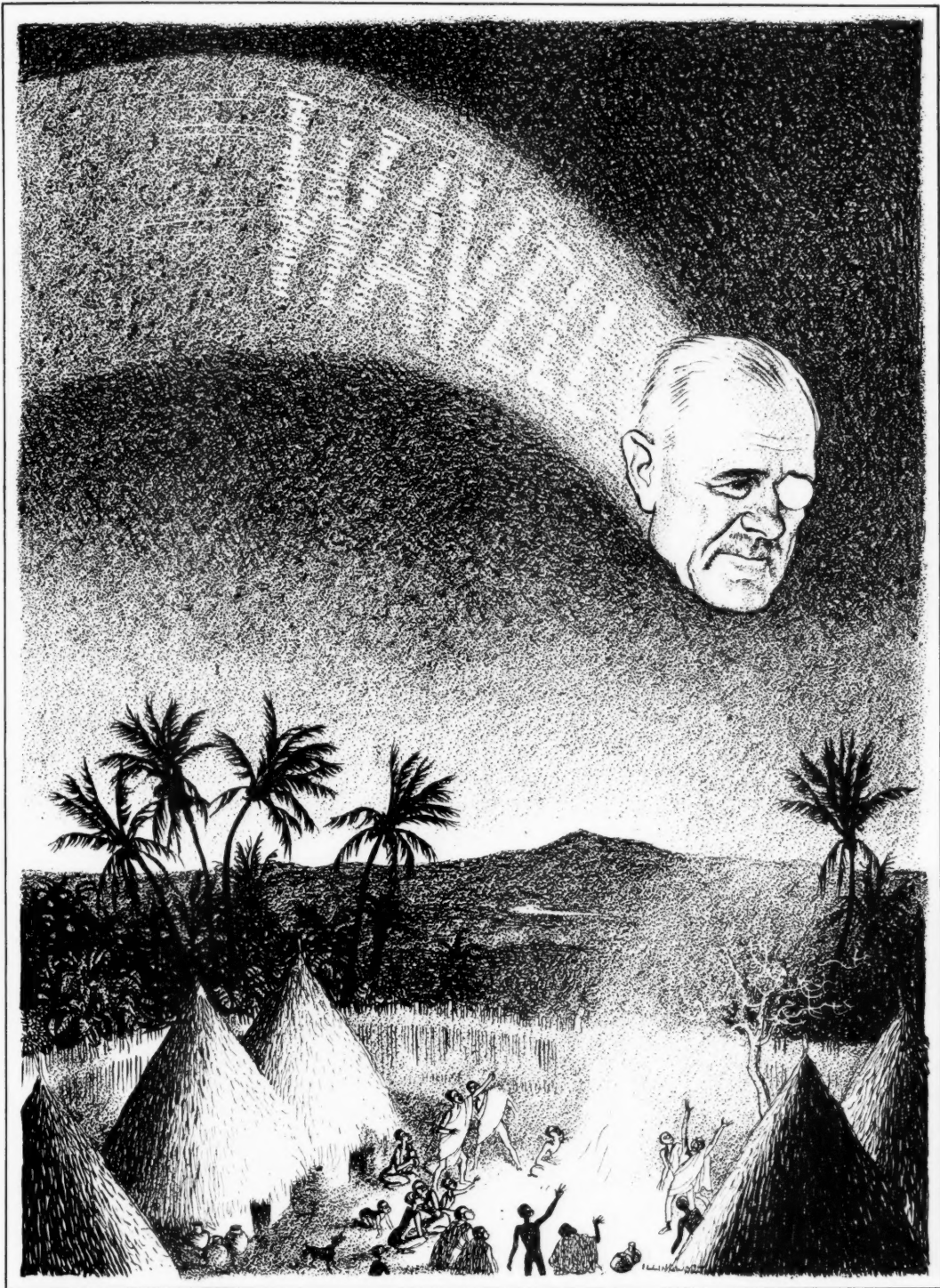
I want to be a Secret Service Man.

Prince, I have lots of push, I promise you,

And you have pull. Do something if you can

To put me in a job. Er—*entre nous* . . .

I'd like to be a Secret Service Man.



PORTENT IN AFRICA

[According to Reuter, great rejoicing has been caused in Somaliland by the appearance of a magnificent new comet.]



Mr. PUNCH'S HOSPITAL COMFORTS FUND

(Registered under the War Charities Act, 1940)

THIS Fund, which was originally started in order to purchase supplies of raw material and distribute them to Voluntary Working Parties for the Hospitals, has already sent out a very large quantity of Knitting Wool, Unbleached Calico and Veltex, as well as many other materials of all varieties, to be made up into comforts for the wounded.

The number of casualties now caused by the indiscriminate bombing of London and our other great cities has made it necessary to extend the operation of our Fund to the provision of medical and surgical supplies for civilian hospitals.

At the same time the severity of winter is causing a renewed demand on behalf of all the Services—especially amongst the men whose duty lies in exposed situations—for Balaclava helmets, gloves, mittens, woollen waistcoats, and the like.

Mr. Punch, in expressing his very sincere gratitude for the generous help already given by subscribers, renews therefore his appeal both for the sake of the Fighting Services and of civilians who have suffered from the ruthless barbarity of the enemy, in the hope that plenty of supplies may be available for all.

Though we know well that these are days of great financial difficulty, we yet ask you, those who can, to send some donation, large or small, according to your means, to PUNCH HOSPITAL COMFORTS FUND, 10 Bouverie Street, London, E.C.4.

Impressions of Parliament

Business Done

Tuesday, February 4th.—House of Commons: Statements on This and That; War Damage Bill in Committee; not to mention a Secret Session.

Wednesday, February 5th.—House of Lords: Enter the Lords Kindersley and Merriman; Tributes to Lord Lloyd.

House of Commons: War Damage Bill in Committee (continued).

Thursday, February 6th.—Grant of £1,600,000,000 more for the War—and similar trifles.

Tuesday, February 4th.—In the House of Commons there are hunting enthusiasts and those who heartily condemn blood sports. There are those whose eyes light up at the thought of pursuing the elusive fox and (one fears) those who would not be above shooting Reynard.

But there is one sport in which all Members, young and old, male and female, join with relish and dash: the new sport of Hunting the Old School Tie.

Captain DAVID MARGESSON, our



A DESERVING CAUSE

"Public Schools . . . come within the definition of charities."—*Capt. CROOKSHANK.*

War Minister (entitled to the Old Harrovians' tie), who, in more leisured times, used to hunt with distinguished packs, is Master of the Hunt. His "kill" of a week or two ago, when he ran to earth a Lieutenant-Colonel BINGHAM,

who had seemed to have too great a partiality for Public School men as potential officers for the Army, is still talked of.

It was a thrilling chase over hedges of prejudice and ploughed fields of irrelevancy, until at length the quarry was sighted, a copy of *The Times* in his mouth, trying to take refuge in the forest of Blimpdom.

Far too thrilling to be allowed to pass quietly into the pages of some Parliamentary Jorrock.

Huntsman DAN FRANKEL, metaphorically touching his forelock to the Master of the Hunt, let out a loud "View hallo!" having sighted a colonel (a full colonel this time) at a Home Guard Zone Headquarters who had called the attention of his officers to Lieutenant-Colonel BINGHAM's letter about the virtues of the Old School Tie.

Captain MARGESSON, with the air of one who "knows his dooty," dug in his spurs, cracked his whip, and said that he had called for a report from the officer concerned. Members, remembering that this had been the formula which preceded the previous kill, rubbed their hands in pleasurable anticipation.

Mr. FRANKEL wanted an assurance that the Colonel's sentiments would not interfere with the appointment of the Right People (in the modern and not the Victorian sense) to Home Guard commissions in the contaminated area.

"Certainly," replied the WAR MINISTER; "that is why I have asked for a report."

So the House must be patient while the latest quarry is dug out.

The House, no doubt recalling that all work and no play makes the Parliamentary Jack a dull boy, seems to have instituted another pastime—the "Quiz" which is now so invaluable a part of daily journalism.

Captain MARGESSON, after nine years as the Great-One-Who-Never-Spoke, has changed over to the part of the Answerer-of-All-Questions. And very well he answers them too.

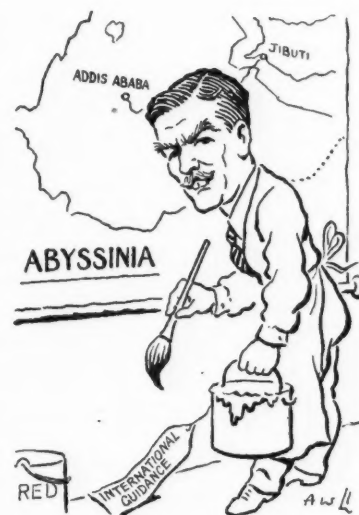
Here is part of his "Quiz" for to-day:

When will the Great Western and the London, Midland and Scottish Railways provide at Wolverhampton the canteens for the Forces promised months ago?

It is all in hand, and the canteens will be opened this week.

(The House, refereeing the match, applauded generously and gave the Captain full marks. But Mr. GEOFFREY MANDER, the inconvenient Liberal M.P. for Wolverhampton, insisted that that was not the right answer. There was no sign of the canteens, said he,

and the Minister must have been misinformed. Considerably shaken, the judges hastily turned their thumbs down, and the Minister, blushing, said he *hoped* indeed that he had not been misinformed. Mr. MANDER looked as though he had not. Drawn game.)



The Painter (Mr. EDEN). "No, Gents, I'm not going to use the red on this map."

Who pays the Czechs' cheques?

The Czechs pay the cheques for the Czech soldiers who are helping the Allied Forces to keep the enemy in check. (Ten marks.)

How do British soldiers captured in the early summer in light battle-dress keep warm in German prison camps?

Battle-dress and greatcoats are being sent out from Britain—one set for each officer or man—and they have got as far as Geneva. (Eight marks—with two more promised when the clothes reach the prisoners.)

What is there to stop the Germans capturing the uniforms and dressing their parachute troops in them, ready for the invasion of Britain?

Well, nothing. (No marks.)

Are Home Guards authorized to fire on all attempts to land troops by parachute?

Yes, certainly they are. (Ten marks—and a bonus of cheers.)

How will the Home Guard know which are parachutists and which are baling-out British airmen?

The Home Guard have a fair meed of common-sense. (Ten marks and an illuminated address on vellum.)

Members were delighted with their



"No, no, Thompson, it's merely a fabulous Arabian bird."

new parlour game, and nodding their approval at the success of the first player, they turned their attention to others, sitting a little apprehensively on the Treasury Bench.

They caught Mr. ARTHUR GREENWOOD, Minister Without Portfolio, who was recently quoted as describing his Department as that of "a man and a boy."

What is the nature of the organization being set up to consider Allied peace aims?

Dunno! There isn't any. (No marks. The player was counted out, and asked no more questions.)

Mr. BROOKE was next player, and he quizzed the MINISTER OF HEALTH.

What is the present annual yield in Great Britain of the Armorial Bearings Duty?

In the year ended March last, £26,403. (Ten marks.)

The duty was imposed 70 years ago, along with duties on male servants, carriages, horses, mules, and horse dealers. The others have all gone—why not this one?

Give it up. (No marks.)

Turning to more serious subjects, Captain MARGESSON told the House that there were 300 accidents a day involving damage to Army vehicles.



OUR BACK BENCH WHO'S WHO

This is Sir THOMAS MOORE, whose love is slight
For any thing or body Muscovite.

This wasn't good enough, and stringent orders had been given to put things right. Offenders would be liable to police prosecution, military punishment, and— The Minister left the sentence unfinished, with a suggestion of something with boiling oil in it.

Mr. ANTHONY EDEN, Foreign Secretary, told a cheering House that the independence of Abyssinia and the throne of the Negus, HAILE SELASSIE, were to be restored by Britain. We should also try to help the Emperor to make his Empire a happier place.

There followed a learned discussion about mortgagees and mortgagors (which is which?) with the CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER, his first lieutenant, Captain CROOKSHANK, the ATTORNEY-GENERAL and a dozen Back-Benchers, all mixed up in a glorious free-for-all quiz, in which nobody bothered to answer any questions but all took a delight in asking real snorters.

The day ended with the appointment of Mr. ROBERT CARY, Eccles's Beau Brummel-ish Member, to the Select Committee on National Expenditure.

Having done his very adequate bit

in the last war—he was an officer on active service at 17—and in the present war, Mr. CARY faces the greatest battle of his career, against the Great Dictators of Extravagance and Waste. The House cheered his appointment to the Committee. Members know that behind his cheery smile and gay manner there is a keen brain and a strong sense of public duty.

Wednesday, February 5th.—Lord KINDERSLEY, impressive in his ermine and scarlet, took his seat in the House of Lords, sponsored by Lord CHATFIELD and Lord BICESTER, in similar finery.

The newly-enobled Sir ROBERT KINDERSLEY, President of the National Savings Movement, disappointed the wits of the Stock Exchange by not taking the (one hopes prophetic) title of "Lord Oodles of Moneymore, in the County of Londonderry." However, he did his stuff with commendable precision and élan, adding one more distinguished figure to those in the Gilded Chamber.

Lord MERRIMAN, President of the Divorce Court, escorted by Lord PORTER and Lord RUSHCLIFFE, was also introduced.

There were tributes to Lord LLOYD, Colonial Secretary and Leader of the House, who died to-day. A man of hard-hitting speech and strong views, but a "man's man" and the wielder of a straight bat. Than that there are few words of greater praise in public life.

Colonel GRETTON formally raised in the Commons a point of privilege resulting from a letter to *The Times* about the lately-closed case of Mr. ROBERT BOOTHBY, M.P. Mr. SPENS urged that it was a clear breach of Parliament's privilege, and moved that the Committee of Privileges look into the matter. Colonel GRETTON, hearing that a letter of apology was being sent "by those concerned," sought and obtained the deferment of further action for the present.

Mr. RICHARD LAW, of the War Office, faced with complaints of Army waste of food, expressed the view that it was impossible overnight to turn many hundreds of thousands of healthy young Britishers into prudent and careful housewives. Sir LEONARD LYLE (known to his friends as "Lyle and True") was not amused; he thought it a pity that the lives of our gallant sailors should be risked to fill the gallant Army's dust-bins and swill-tubs.

Major LLOYD GEORGE, for the Food Ministry, defended the food-value of the rabbit. It was pointed out to him by about 25 M.P.s, in a Greek chorus,

that the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. R. S. HUDSON, had put the food-value at nil.

The Major made non-committal noises. A classic example, it was remarked, of passing the buck—not to mention the doe.

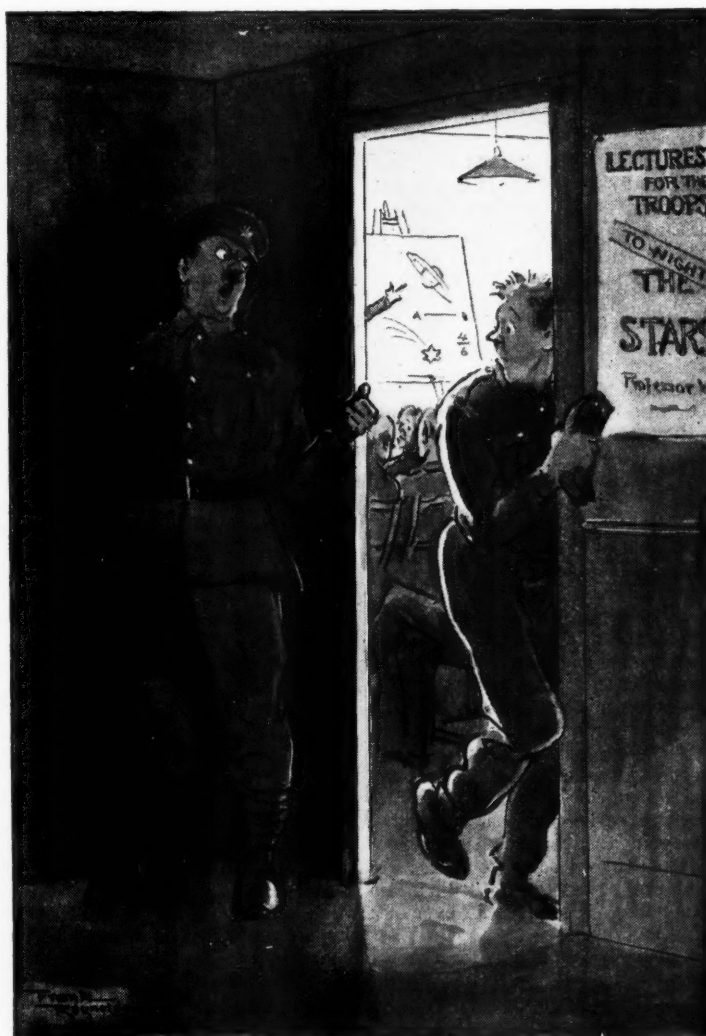
From which high plane we passed into the technicalities of the War Damage Bill once more.

Thursday, February 6th.—Mr. HERBERT MORRISON, Home Secretary, promised tin hats for all fire-watchers—in time. A couple were produced as exhibits. They looked remarkably like the grey hats worn by Victorian school-girls, complete

with a nice black ribbon threaded in and out of the crown.

The PRIME MINISTER paid eloquent tribute to Lord LLOYD—"a good and faithful servant."

Sir KINGSLEY WOOD, Chancellor of the Exchequer, spoke for 16 minutes in asking the House for another £1,600,000,000 for the war. Speaking on behalf of the Treasury, Sir KINGSLEY's text was "We can take it." The granting of cash at the rate of £100,000,000 a minute did not seem to be a matter of any great importance, for the attendance while the Chancellor was speaking was: Conservative 24, Labour 6, Liberal 3, I.L.P. 1, Communists 0, Ministers (assorted) 6.



"'Op back! You're not the only one that's been took in."

International Scheme

COUSIN FLORENCE said she had no idea—none whatever—how she had ever come to think of such a thing; and none of the rest of us had either, although we didn't say so. It wasn't, actually, at all like Cousin Florence to think of anything.

Perhaps Aunt Emma came nearest to the truth when she exclaimed, rather sadly, that this war was responsible for many things.

Anyway both Cousin Florence's remark and Aunt Emma's were left out of the Minutes of the Meeting, and Miss Pin only put in that a resolution had been proposed and carried that there should be an informal and yet regular exchange of letters between a representative of the Movement in Little Fiddle-on-the-Green and one in the United States of America.

"Just homely news," said Cousin Florence.

Miss Littlemug volunteered at once, and said that she thought it would be possible to give quite a vivid description of the time the three bombs fell in the field, and what it felt like to be in bed and hear the German planes overhead looking for one, hour after hour, and how one spent all day long at meetings, only rushing in just before the black-out.

Mrs. Battlegate at once said that there was no homely news about any of all that, and in any case it would probably not be passed by the Censor, and surely what was wanted was just a day-to-day record of the English housewife's little ups-and-downs, and in return we should learn something of life in Iowa, Kentucky, or Colorado.

(No one had any idea *why* those States in particular were in the mind of Mrs. Battlegate, and later on several people discussed the point. It turned out that everyone had thought of Iowa, Miss Dodge—being musical—of Kentucky, and absolutely no one of Colorado. But Mrs. Pledge declared that Arizona had occurred to her almost at once, because an uncle of her husband's many years earlier had thought he might be going to inherit some property there. It so turned out that he never did, and that, Mrs. Pledge said, had fixed the name of the place for ever in her mind.)

It may have been a matter for regret but it was none for surprise when Miss Littlemug stood up, collected her bag, her gloves, her walking-stick, her letters for the post, her newspaper and her knitting, and said that there was no question of taking offence—she was

not like that—but if ridicule was to be poured upon her every word she should prefer to withdraw from the Committee Meeting.

Mrs. Battlegate said nothing, and just looked into the distance, and everybody else begged Miss Littlemug to reconsider the position, and she did so almost immediately.

"... little ups-and-downs of everyday life," Mrs. Battlegate then resumed—and one could practically see Aunt Emma thinking about Uncle Egbert's unreasoning aversion to either macaroni, spaghetti, or baked beans; Cousin Florence mentally visiting the Registry Office for Domestic Servants yet once again; and Miss Plum composing a speech that would make absolutely clear to the daily help what were Miss Plum's standards of work, cleanliness, punctuality and sobriety, *without* in any way hurting her feelings.

"I wonder," Aunt Emma said wistfully, "if the little ups-and-downs in America are just the same as ours. Take Ohio, for instance."

The Committee members practically one and all reacted to Ohio. Either they said "Skyscrapers" or "Labour-saving devices," or "Main Street."

Old Lady Flagge went further than most people, and made quite a little speech.

"Chemists' shops selling ices and calling themselves drug-stores, and a number of Irish—many of them in the Police Force, I believe, and so on."

"Well," said Priscilla, "*they* would write about those things, and *we* should write about ours. I should be quite ready to correspond with someone in either Nebraska or Vermont."

(Long afterwards one asked her privately why Nebraska or Vermont, and Priscilla explained that it was because she wanted to show off. A curious point is that one had oneself already quite assumed this—and yet was astonished at being told so.)

It was left to Miss Pin, the secretary, to put the whole affair in train, and she is, as a matter of fact, still doing so.

The last time Priscilla asked to whom she was to write and when, Miss Pin replied that Minnesota wasn't any good, but Michigan was a possibility, and failing that, Indiana.

And Priscilla said that if in the whole of Minnesota there wasn't a single housewife who wanted to have a letter from her, she thought she'd just devote herself to sending a postcard of the *Queen Mary* to her old Headmistress in Northumberland.

Miss Pin, who has a spirit that springs up readily whenever Mr. Pancatto, her employer, is out of sight

and hearing, simply retorted that President Roosevelt was behaving magnificently and no doubt the housewives of Alabama would soon follow suit. E. M. D.

Divided We Stand

EVERY once in a while I spend an evening slanging somebody or something. I sit in my chair and write a few thousand indignant words. There is nothing Teutonic about my hatred. It is not reasoned, annotated and indexed. It is instinctive, passionate and baseless. And when I have torn the object of my hatred into little pieces I feel so full of pity that I am glad it still exists.

Now when people make long speeches to assure the world that we are a united nation I trust that they merely mean united in our determination to win the war. I hope that we never become united about anything else. For a nation incapable of hatred is united only in folly, and should we agree unanimously to erect a statue of Mr. Churchill in Trafalgar Square, the man would be a patriot, if a misguided one, who would throw a tomato at it.

But I do not believe that we are in any great danger of becoming a united nation. We are still torn by opposing faiths and conflicting ideals. Just look at what happened when Colonel Bingham wrote a letter to *The Times*.

I suppose that it did not occur to the Colonel that his letter was so highly inflammable. He had, in the course of his everyday duties, reached a conclusion that he believed would be of interest to the world at large. He did not suggest that the poor should eat cake: he merely mentioned that men who had attended public schools appeared to make better officers than those who had not.

Nothing can split the country more than a mention of public schools, save perhaps the mention of public houses, and nothing stirs the daily Press to more extravagant indignation. Overnight the unfortunate Colonel became a national figure of a somewhat nebulous character. It was hard to determine whether to admire his fame or pity his infamy.

Now Colonel Bingham, I believe, simply meant to say that most men who had attended a public school had received some benefit from that attendance. He inferred that other men would also have benefited from such attendance. And I believe that the Colonel was right.



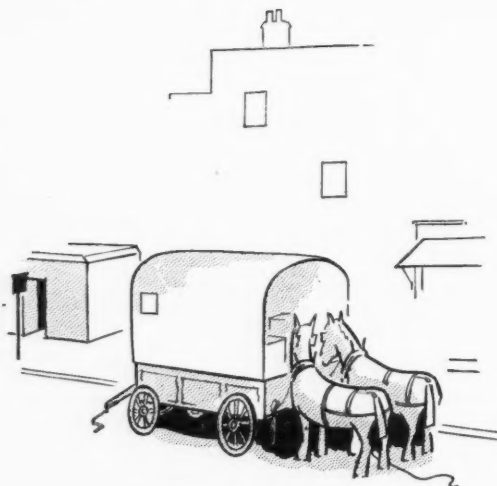
"It's no use turning on the News now: the worst is over."

After all, in this age of commerce even the wealthy expect to obtain value for their money, and a man who is paid twice as much as his elementary colleague should produce better results. I believe that he does. I am convinced that our public schools, on the whole, can produce better officers than our secondary or elementary schools, and better doctors, better statesmen, better tinkers, better tailors, better burglars and better fraudulent company promoters.

Meanwhile, a casual observer of the

storm may carry away strange and mistaken impressions. He will see Colonel Bingham's opponents hurling abuse at their feudal oppressors. He will believe that in their wrath they will descend upon our more famous public schools, hurl brickbats through their windows, set fire to their dormitories and massacre the fledglings of an effete aristocracy within their walls. Unless of course their few defenders can counter proletarian numbers with a strategy born of tradition.

My good friend, cease to worry. Those vituperations are the outcome of a balanced hatred. These gentlemen will not burn a school to which they hope to send their sons. They merely desire, wholeheartedly and sincerely, its gentle abolition. And while they argue so violently, Time, the only non-belligerent neutral, will take a hand. Time will not abolish, it will build; it will not lower the particular standard, it will raise the general standard. And what is now a public school will, I believe, become public.



"Funny thing, I can always tell when the sirens have sounded."

Our Booking-Office

(By Mr. Punch's Staff of Learned Clerks)

The War to End War

THOSE who (wisely) read through the nine hundred or so pages of *The Thibaults*, containing the translation of about half of M. ROGER MARTIN DU GARD's novel, *Les Thibault*, will welcome the concluding portion of nearly 1,100 pages entitled *Summer, 1914* (THE BODLEY HEAD, 25/-). Others who now make their first acquaintance with this French family will find that though some of the characters appear here without introduction their earlier places in the long story may be readily deduced. The greater part of the present book deals in minute detail, almost hour by hour, with the few weeks between the Serajevo crime and the first few days of the war. We are shown the attitudes towards the coming conflict assumed by many individuals of varying influence and standing—statesmen, society folk, communists, journalists, soldiers, members of the working classes, professional men, civil servants. It is indicated that there were diplomats and militarists who deliberately worked for war, but that in the common mind there was almost everywhere the feeling that though a war threatened, its realization was inconceivable. The story is mainly concerned with a group of socialists, including *Jacques Thibault*, who felt certain that their movement was strong enough to prevent war by means of an international strike. *Jacques* describes himself as a "tiresome and disappointing being." He is perhaps not far wrong, but he and the very numerous people, pictured at full length or sketched with a few vivid touches, with whom he comes into contact, all justify their positions in a work of outstanding quality and absorbing interest.

Return to the Plough

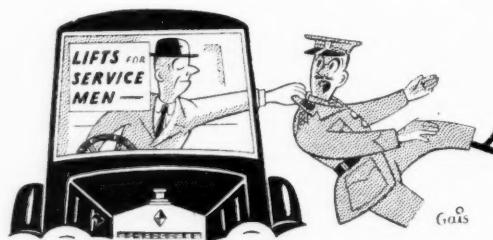
When a man loves the land enough to subsidize his farming out of his literary earnings there is still hope for our misused countryside; and when he does so, rather against the grain, for the sake of his children and his country, the feat becomes both exemplary and glorious. You cannot really write and work on the land—the day is not long enough; and when in 1937 Mr. HENRY WILLIAMSON bought a derelict yeoman holding in Norfolk—with nothing but game alive on it—he had not only to pit his inheritance and earnings against the "farming is finished" of every expert sympathizer, but forego any opportunity for the incubation of a work of art. Followed a two years' fight against every obstacle with which local neglect and legislative crassness could cumber the land; an eight-hundred-pound deficit at the end of the first year and family life in a ruined granary. The second year saw a farmstead in being. In *The Story of a Norfolk Farm* (FABER AND FABER, 10/6) you have, documented up to the hilt, one of the shrewdest blows struck in the war that underlies all wars—the war of the country against the town.

French Eye-Witness

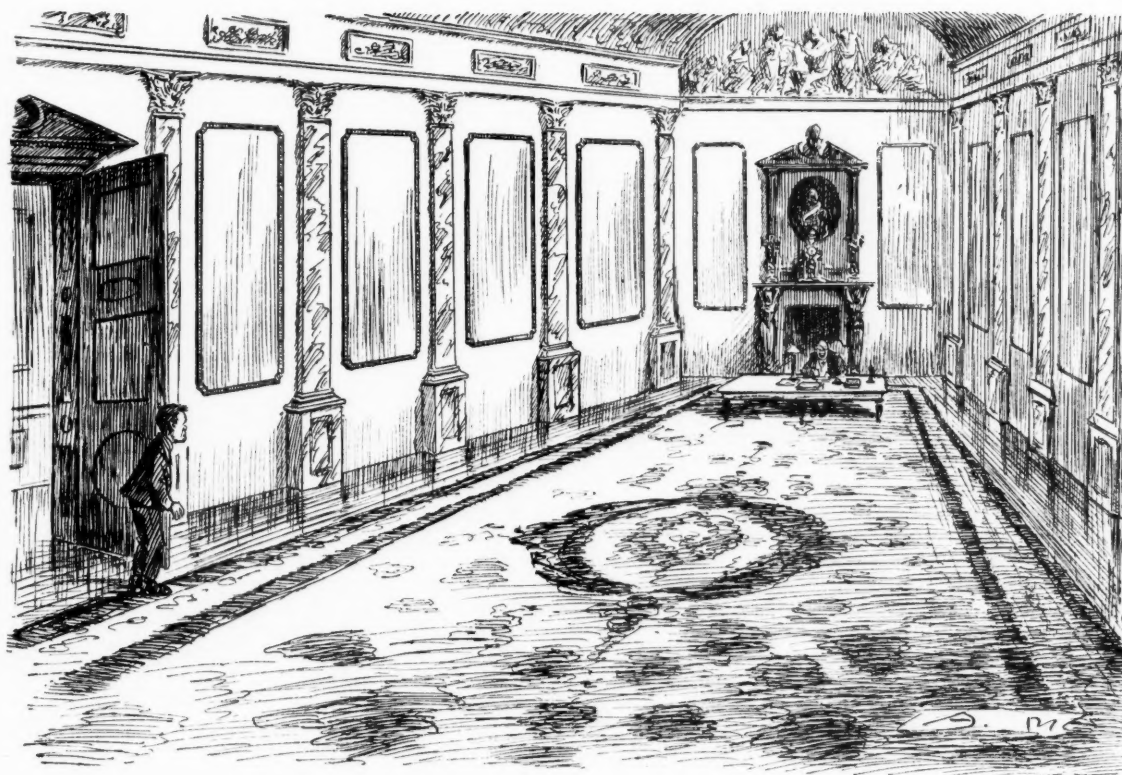
To explain the collapse of France to a mystified England, to apportion blame, to exonerate the guiltless and to extol the heroes of a forlorn hope, is a great task and M. ANDRÉ MAUROIS has performed it admirably. France fell for lack of the planes and tanks she could perfectly well have assembled beforehand; because our own governing classes—especially the City—favoured a strong Germany; because both France and England acted as though freedom (national and personal) could be served without hard work and self-discipline, whereas the dictators kept the popular nose to the grindstone. *Why France Fell* (LANE, 5/-) is not, however, save in the upshot, a study of ideologies. It is an eye-witness's account, brilliant, impartial, sympathetic, of the war in France and the social disintegration that preceded it—decent bourgeois upset by sops to communism, leaders at loggerheads, army equipment sacrificed to the fetish of the Maginot Line. German propaganda found it easy to convince one half France that we had let France down. The French ambassador asserted to M. MAUROIS that England had fulfilled her promises to the letter. The tragedy was that we had not been asked to promise more.

In Defence of Trees

WORDSWORTH having preferred one impulse from a vernal wood to the philosophic teaching of all the sages, it remains for Mr. RICHARD ST. BARBE BAKER to affirm that of all living things (dog-lovers, please note) trees are the most



"I tell you I don't want your confounded lift!"



Head of Government Department (in his private room in recently-commandeered hotel). "Boy! BRING SOME MORE COAL!"

Arthur Moreland, February 14th, 1917

companionable. There is undoubtedly a good deal to be said, when you come to think of it, for friends so beautiful, so tactful in their ethical insinuations and so unexact in their requirements. Most mature trees only demand to be let alone, and a very little preferential treatment would secure a fair chance in life for their offspring. Because neither of these conditions obtains in these islands, our author, founder of the Society of the Men of the Trees, has produced an exquisite and eloquent plea for a more enlightened policy. *Trees* (DRUMMOND, 10/6) furnishes four dozen masterpieces of sylvan photography with a text whose matter ranges from a well-deserved paean on the woodcraft industries of Colesbourne near Cheltenham to botany, arboriculture, landscape gardening and mythology. Its quotations—especially those from the eighteenth-century tree-fan GILPIN—are both apt and inspiring; but was there really a second ALEXANDER POPE, besides the poet, cultivating a garden at Twickenham in 1718 or so?

The Villain is a Hero.

Most readers of Miss LESLIE FORD's new crime story, *Road to Folly* (COLLINS, 7/6), will spot the victim on the first page. A nastier double-tracker of past and present husbands and a greedier, more exquisitely-groomed grabber of other people's hearts and property would not be easy to find, though it is more than difficult to find her murderer and that of her equally nasty maid. The book is written in the first person by an old school-friend of *Phyllis* the victim, and it is interesting to see how the style roughens when describing her and softens to beauty when it describes the delightful old chatelaine of a house in Charleston and her young niece, whose lives *Phyllis* would have wrecked quite cheerfully for the sake of their antique furniture. It is a baffling book full of old mysteries and slick modernity, but the author might have given us some early hints about motives.



"Oh, Mr. Butterfield, Mr. Fitzsimmons would like to see you in his office at once."

Home Guard Goings-On

"Our Patrols Were Active."

IT was a purely voluntary affair. Our Section Leader had made that clear from the beginning. If any of us preferred to waste a glorious moonlight night by the fireside, covering ourselves with tobacco-ash and yawning our heads off, then we were perfectly free to do so. If, on the other hand (and here our Section Leader had fixed us with a hypnotic eye), the Section turned out in full strength to

give the exercise its support, then it would achieve three things: first, it would make its Leader a happy man; secondly, it would earn the undying respect of "A" Section, its collaborators for the occasion, and thirdly, it would benefit by an invigorating and educational experience, namely an hour's crawl on its bellies across the frozen moor . . .

The response was heartening, full

marks for attendance only being snatched from us by the absence of Mr. Benn. Frankly, we were disappointed in Mr. Benn. There was some speculation whether his keenness had been losing its edge lately. Mr. Punnett recalled significantly that after his last two hours' sentry-go Mr. Benn had confessed to having felt "not very comfortable out there"; true, there had been a raid on at the time and the sentry had been without cover or companionship, but the remark had not been well received, and was now feared to have been the first hint of a weakening morale.

It was the intervention of little Mr. King which put an end to these unfounded conjecturings. "You need to remember," he said, shaking his neat grey head reprovingly—"e's not a young chap, Mr. Benn isn't; no, not for all 'im being so big-made!" And the gossips held their peace.

The exercise had been hatched up at a solemn Staff Talk between our Section Leader and Mr. Smirk, Leader of "A" Section. "A" Section was on duty that night and Mr. Smirk, thinking it high time that his men should have a taste of working in the dark (ever the privilege of the rank-and-file), had decided to take advantage of a full moon to let them down gently at their first attempt. However, the projected operations had grown to such magnitude during the preliminary planning that our own Section had finally been invited to take a hand. This would enable Mr. Smirk to leave an adequate force in the guard-room in case any less innocuous exercise should take shape in the neighbourhood, while still giving full scope to his military genius.

Our instructions were simple. It appeared (from information received) that a small number of the enemy was in possession of a certain mound, tumulus or strategic height some half-mile out across the moor. We were to approach this stronghold by stealth and bring about its downfall, taking prisoners if possible. That was all.

We of "B" Section were a little hurt to learn that our function would be merely that of a decoy ("a bunch of ruddy red-herrings," as Mr. Corker had redundantly put it in the first sting of resentment), Mr. Smirk's plan having provided for the real glory to go to his own men. Our task was to approach the enemy unobtrusively until we were within ear-shot and then attract his attention by an orgy of twig-cracking, rifle-dropping and other intentional clumsinesses so that "A" Section could sweep up from the rear, surprising and overpowering

the foe with a minimum of bloodshed and delay.

After we had assimilated the details thoroughly, politely congratulating Mr. Smirk on the adoption of tactics not scorned even by General Wavell, we buckled on our harness and synchronized our watches. (The strangers of "A" Section were entertained to see that little Mr. King's watch, substantially built and practically spherical, was produced from a worn cardboard-box and a quantity of soiled cotton-wool.) Then we adjusted our helmets to a rakish B.E.F. angle and passed out tensely into the silvery night.

On the edge of the moor our leaders said a last word to their men, wished each other good luck, and gravely shook hands. The battle was on. In sober confidence our Sections went their separate and premeditated ways.

For mere beginners at the game we didn't do too badly. Apart from the chattering of an imperfectly-fitting bayonet and an occasional crash as our Section Leader drew our attention to an ice-bound pool, the procession filed along inconspicuously enough. Our instructions to keep five yards between each man were at first respected to the inch, for although each of us felt confident of keeping his own bayonet out of mischief, there was a suspicion that the man behind might not be equally sure of himself. It was this uneasiness which presently played havoc with our formation, for little Mr. King, bringing up the rear, suddenly imagined that he was falling behind, and took a pace or two at the double; Mr. Tucker, hearing the quickening footfalls and fearing an impending flesh-wound, also broke into a precautionary lope, spreading the infection to Mr. Corker, who passed it on at a lurching trot to Mr. Curtis. Thus, after the first five minutes or so we proceeded behind our Leader in tightly-bunched formation. Fortunately he was too absorbed to be alive to his peril, and when he paused to give instructions he no doubt attributed our proximity to a burst of sprinting.

We approached our objective by an indirect route, chosen for the sake of the cover it afforded. Mr. Corker, on whom the ban of silence lay irksomely, soon began to announce that we were hopelessly lost. He had shot thousands of "rabbits" on this very ground, he declared hoarsely, and was confident that every step was taking us farther from our goal. The commentary would have continued indefinitely but for a brisk trip across open country; this exhausted Mr. Corker's reserves of breath, and presently his misgivings were proved groundless, for two right-

angle deflections from our line of progress had brought before our eyes the strategic height itself, softly silhouetted against the skyline. We subsided panting on the heather, gathering our strength for the final dash.

At this point Mr. Punnitt took the opportunity to untie a small parcel of provisions, and courteously invited the rest of us to join him in a snack. We were much impressed by his coolness. It was the sort of thing we had read about, we told ourselves, in agency messages about the Army of the Nile. Our Section Leader alone was grudging of admiration. Perhaps he feared that a concerted paroxysm of ungovernable

indigestion might reveal our position; perhaps it was just that he could not reconcile the beauty of the night with the base materialism of a full-blooded beef sandwich. Whatever his reasons, he waved the offer aside and dispatched Mr. King and Mr. Tucker on reconnaissance with their first mouthfuls unmastered.

They crept away obediently, and presently returned with the news that the mound was beyond doubt occupied.

"Beg to report," said Mr. Tucker formally, "at least two of the enemy in possession."

"Ah!" said our Section Leader, his suspicions confirmed.

"Talkin' fifteen to the dozen, they



"Do you think you could soak the labels off the Symphony Number Eight in B major? I want to surprise someone."

was!" said Mr. King, collapsing excitedly amongst us. "That's how we knew they was there, see? We could 'ear 'em but not see 'em! They was talkin' about rabbuts—" •

"Rabbuts?" said Mr. Corker, seizing the first opportunity to make himself useful—"why, that chumulus is alive with rabbuts; nothing *but* rabbuts on that chumulus. Well, I mean, take last Sunday, I mean, when we was out with guns, Jim Archer an' me; talk about rabbuts—"

Our Section Leader stirred sharply. "Which way were they facing, Mr. Tucker?"

Mr. Tucker explained that as the enemy had not been visible it was difficult to say. From the sound of it they seemed to be facing away from us.

"Yes," said our Section Leader, taking in the situation—"follow me, men. If I lie down, do the same. Ready!"

He set out stealthily across the strip of exposed ground, and when his figure threatened to merge into the shadows, Mr. Corker led the rest of us in his wake. We had not covered more than fifty yards when Mr. Corker fell abruptly on his face. A second later we were all flattened in the heather, waiting for our Section Leader to rise again. Several minutes passed; from the dimness ahead there came muffled cracklings, and the sound of some heavy object being laboriously moved; there were grunts and stifled exclamations. Then, to Mr. Corker's horror and amazement, there appeared less than a yard from his face the sundered head of our Leader, hatless and wild-eyed, gleaming coldly in the moonlight. For the first time in his life Mr. Corker was at

a loss for words; he could only return the Thing's hellish gaze. Then the tension was snapped suddenly.

"Don't lie there," said the voice of our Section Leader, "liked a stuffed ape! *Get me out of this blasted pit!*"

The rest of us got him out. Mr. Corker was too shaken to take part. No further reference has been made to this incident—not, at any rate, in our Section Leader's hearing.

At the foot of the mound, in a tangle of brushwood and young fir-trees, we paused again. Above us, and facing in the direction from which "A" Section was scheduled to attack in exactly two minutes (by our synchronized watches), two standing figures were visible. A voice floated down to us clearly.

"But over yonder," it said—and an arm was raised to point—"beyond Gallows Top over towards Harry Cross's farm—"

"Noise!" commanded our Section Leader—"make a noise, for the lord's sake!" He began to thrash about him wildly with his rifle, and the rest of us threw ourselves into the game with zest. Bolts were rattled, young trees callously maimed, boots kicked frenziedly together; we cleared our throats raucously, made savage bayonet-lunges at the mound's defenceless sides, and set up a babel of primitive cries. Mr. Corker began a hysterical rendering of "I'm Dancing with Tears in My Eyes," but our Section Leader decided that we had now done what was necessary, and silenced us with a sharp word of command.

We looked upwards in the uncanny hush that followed. The two figures had not moved. The other voice was speaking.

"But suppose," it said, "you was to cut across Allen's forty-acre field—"

Our Section Leader all but wrung his hands. Thirty seconds from now Mr. Smirk would lead his men straight into the arms of the enemy. We stared at each other blankly. Then, just as the situation seemed lost, little Mr. King was brilliantly inspired to retrieve it. He had been eyeing the stronghold narrowly for some time, and suddenly he gave a start of recognition.

"Why!" he exclaimed delightedly—"if it isn't Mr. Benn, turned out after all!" He began to leap up the incline like a mountain goat. "Mr. Benn! Mr. Benn! It's me—it's Mr. King!"

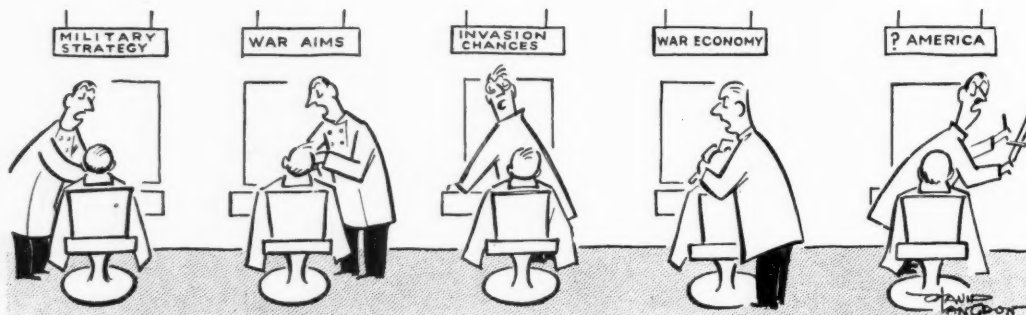
The larger of the enemy turned and began to approach curiously. The other followed.

"Hallo, there, Mr. King!" boomed Mr. Benn's voice. "Blest if I hadn't forgotten all about you chaps, arguing with my friend Mr. Snape here. Listen, now: if you wanted to get to Harry Cross's farm for a bit of rabbit-shooting—"

But Mr. King's work was done. Punctual to the second, "A" Section swarmed over the other side of the mound and crushed all resistance without a shot being fired.

Jacques Joix

A QUESTION that troubles my sleep o' nights
Is this: How much would it take
To purchase the Foreign Translation Rights
Of *Finnegan's Wake*?



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